



# TOP TIPS FOR BARTERING IN MARKETS ABROAD

*Travelex's Global Guide*

# Getting more for your money in Moroccan markets, bartering your way to better buys in Beijing and other insider tips on shopping abroad

This short guide has been compiled by Travelex experts with first-hand knowledge from a selection of countries across the globe. It outlines local customs to help you make the most of your shopping experience - and may even make your spending money go a little further.

To barter or not to barter? In some cultures it's expected, in others it depends on where you're shopping, and in many places it's simply not done at all.

As a general rule of thumb, it's safe to say that in Africa and Asia bartering is the norm, except in Western-style and government-run shops. Prices elsewhere are likely to be artificially hiked with the expectation that they will be reduced to make a sale.

In Western cultures, bartering is usually reserved for street and flea markets, with prices being fixed in shops - although it's always acceptable to enquire if that's the best deal on offer wherever you are, whatever you're buying.

In this guide we cover: **North Africa, South Africa, Dubai, India, Thailand, Bali, Japan, China, Turkey, Greece, Spain, Peru, Brazil** and **Mexico**. Happy bartering!

Look out for our Quick Tips throughout the guide



SHOPPING CURRENCY



DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR %



INSIDER TIP

## NORTH AFRICA

In **Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt** bartering is firmly embedded into local culture. Tourists flock to souks and bazaars, searching for bargains such as leather goods, shoes and clothing, rugs and carpets, ceramics, crafts, jewellery and paintings.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Moroccan Dirham, Tunisian Dinar, Egyptian Pound



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : 50%

Tourists are often quoted a higher price than locals - aim to reduce the asking price by half.



### INSIDER TIP:

It is not acceptable to haggle for food.

## SOUTH AFRICA

There are some fantastic markets to be found at **Knysna**, Green Market Square in **Cape Town** and Bruma Lake in **Johannesburg**. Local artisans sell wooden animals, wire sculptures, beaded jewellery, pottery, embroidered bags and other hand-made items.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

South African Rand



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : 40%

Small items such as keyrings may start at around 15R. Most prices are negotiable, especially for the more expensive items - with the possibility of up to 40% off if you're a skilled haggler.



### INSIDER TIP:

Try shopping at the end of the day for the best reductions.

## DUBAI

Whilst Dubai is known for its luxury shopping malls and upmarket restaurants, where prices are non-negotiable, visitors who head for the souks can haggle their hearts out! There are speciality markets like the **Gold Souk, Khan Murjan** for arts and crafts, and the **Meena Bazaar** for fashion.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Dirham



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : 50%

Do your research before you venture out so you have a rough idea of the likely costs - then you can say with authority that you've seen an item for less elsewhere. Start with a really low offer but settle for around 50% off.



### INSIDER TIP:

Carry coins and small-value notes, otherwise it could make it harder to persuade a trader you've not got the money to spend.

## INDIA

In India, **every** transaction is negotiated, even pieces of fruit on a market stall! For this reason, shopping can take a very long time. Don't forget that vendors are expert negotiators but don't be daunted - keep smiling and you could save yourself many Rupees.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Indian Rupees



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : UP TO 70%

Price labels are rare in India. The best way to find out an item's worth is to visit several stores selling it. Try for 70% off the first price you're offered - and don't ever settle for less than 30%.



### INSIDER TIP:

Shopkeepers consider the first sale of the day to be lucky, so be an early bird and you might get a better price.

## THAILAND

There are street markets all over Thailand. In **Bangkok** there is the legendary Khao San Road, but one of the best markets in the city is the Chatuchak Weekend Market - with thousands of stalls selling clothes, souvenirs and food! It can be a dizzying experience, so keep your wits about you and just have fun.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Thai Baht



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : 50%

Rarely, if ever, are prices on items non-negotiable. Prices can be reduced as much as 50% and the more you buy, the easier it is to negotiate.



### INSIDER TIP:

Keep the value of the Baht in mind and you'll avoid wasting time haggling over a few pence.

## JAPAN

Known as the shopping heaven for electronic goods . Although bartering is not generally part of everyday life in Japan, with the exception of flea markets, it is possible to negotiate a reduction on certain goods. Savings are more easily found by shopping around for special offers and discounts.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Japanese Yen



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : 10%

It is a legal requirement to show prices on goods for sale. Discounts can range from 2000-4000 Yen, but the selling price is often very close to the asking price.



### INSIDER TIP:

The best time to bag a bargain is after 19.00 on a Sunday, as many shops are keen to shift their goods by the end of the day.

## BALI

Bargaining is very much part of life in Bali and locals see it as an enjoyable game, so why not do the same? The best purchases will be found off the beaten track, in the villages where the artisans live. You can buy here with the satisfaction of knowing that your money goes to the person who did all the hard work.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Indonesian Rupiah



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : 30%

Agreeing a price is about communication as much as numbers, so striking up a friendly rapport with a shopkeeper is a good starting place. Try asking for the 'morning price' if you're there before Midday - you could bag yourself a bargain. You can hope to negotiate a 30% discount.



### INSIDER TIP:

Don't shop with a tour group as it's possible the costs will include a commission for the tour guide.

## CHINA

There are some great markets to explore - Yu Garden in **Shanghai**, the Silk Market in **Beijing** and Tsim Sha Tsui in **Hong Kong** are just three examples of where you can fill your bags with authentic souvenirs. Do expect to be approached relentlessly by eager shopkeepers and definitely be prepared to haggle!



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Chinese Yuan, Hong Kong Dollars in Hong Kong



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : UP TO 90%

At tourist hotspots, like the Badaling section of the Great Wall, asking prices can be inflated. Work out for yourself what you'd be happy to pay and stick to that. You could pay as little as a tenth of the asking price.



### INSIDER TIP:

Be prepared to walk away if the price isn't as low as you'd like - you will be called back if there's room for negotiation- and if you're not, then at least you'll know to alter your price for the next stall!

## TURKEY

Straddling Europe and Asia, bartering is definitely part of the shopping experience in Turkey, though not in luxury outlets or supermarkets. Visit the bustling marketplaces in **Bodrum** and **Marmaris** for great deals on leather goods, carpets and other souvenirs.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Turkish Lira & Euro



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : 40%

Let the shopkeeper quote the first price - then you can make a counter-offer, of a half or even a quarter of the offered price. It should be possible to manage a 40% reduction at least.



### INSIDER TIP:

Don't show too much enthusiasm for the article you'd like to buy - try asking for the price of several items at the same time.

## SPAIN

It seems the further south you go in Europe, the more likely you are to encounter bartering. In the market places across Spain and the Balearic Islands, bartering is practically a national sport!



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Euro



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : UP TO 40%

The economic downturn has made bartering harder but you could hope for a 30-40% discount if you're polite and persistent. Merchants are more likely to reduce their prices at the beginning and end of the day.



### INSIDER TIP:

Learn a few Spanish phrases and have a friend with you who can pretend to dissuade you from making a purchase!

## GREECE

Once an important part of Greek culture, haggling has become less prevalent since the introduction of the Euro. It's still worth trying with independent merchants and in street and flea markets.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Euro



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : 50%

After the adoption of the Euro in 2002, prices in Greece shot up. Street-sellers' prices, however, are often lower than shop prices and dropping them is still the norm. Hagglers can hope to shave off up to half of the original asking price.



### INSIDER TIP:

Always be polite and take your time. If you rush you're more likely to over-pay and may also cause offence.

## PERU

With an age-old tradition of textile weaving and hand-crafted ceramics, Peru is a souvenir-shopper's paradise. Think alpaca wool and there's nowhere better than **Arequipa**, **Lima** or **Cusco**. In independent shops and markets, bargaining is the norm but it's usually more gentle than in other, more fiery Latino cultures.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Peruvian Nuevo Sol



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : UP TO 40%

You can hope to achieve up to 20% off the price of small items and up to 40% off more expensive items. Many prices carry a sales tax of approximately 18%, which is non-refundable unless you make your purchase in the departure lounge at an airport.



### INSIDER TIP:

Adjust your bartering tactics to your surroundings. In cities it can be assertive but in villages a gentler approach is preferred.

## BRAZIL

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Brazil's booming economic climate has led to a notable increase in the cost of goods. It's a mixed bag in terms of where bartering is an accepted custom - in street stalls and markets it's definitely worth a try!



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Brazilian Real



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : 20%

In general, paying cash and buying more will lead to a better discount. It's acceptable to be given a price and then try for a 20% reduction.



### INSIDER TIP:

Wherever you're shopping, remember traders can be Oscar-winning actors, so don't be taken in by the look of horror when you put forward a lower price - it's all part of the game.

## MEXICO

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Bartering is certainly the Mexican way in markets. You're likely to be approached on the street and invited in to shops - and even be offered tequila! At some Mayan sites, like Chichén Itzá, only local villagers are allowed to trade.



### SHOPPING CURRENCY:

Mexican Peso, US Dollars



### DISCOUNT TO AIM FOR : UP TO 50%

Spanish-speakers tend to get better deals so it's worth brushing up on a few choice phrases. Using Pesos over US Dollars will also get you more value for money. You can reasonably hope for a 25% drop in price and may even manage up to 50%.



### INSIDER TIP:

Take your own calculator! Use it to check your figures so you're not confused by exchange rates.

### References:

Thank you to our colleagues around the world for their advice.  
We would also like to thank the following for additional information:

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